

IV. Resource Inventory

A. Resources

1. Historic & Cultural Sites to be Linked and Interpreted by the Trail

Blue Bell Inn

7303 Woodland Ave., Philadelphia, PA

215-365-5914

www.libertynet.org/historic/blueb.html

The Blue Bell Tavern is located along Cobbs Creek in West Philadelphia. The first inhabitants of this site were the Native American Lenni-Lenapi, which means the “original people.” When the Swedes arrived in the 1600’s, fur trade along the Minquas Indian Trail, which passed the site of the present Blue Bell, became important. Here, in the nearby stream, Swedish Governor Johan Printz built the first water powered gristmill in Pennsylvania. The mill operated until the beginning of the nineteenth century, but the structure did not survive.



1801 view with 3 1/2-story addition

The building that exists on the site today was constructed as early as 1750. The two-story, coursed and rough-hewn fieldstone front has a one-story rubble rear ell, a typical colonial building plan for this area. In 1801 a three-and-a-half story rubble addition was built, but was demolished in 1941 to make way for the Cobbs Creek Parkway. As a southern gateway to the city, the tavern was an important rest stop along what was once the “King’s Highway,” (now Woodland Avenue), the main road between Philadelphia and the southern colonies. George Washington stayed here on

several of his trips to Philadelphia. Also, a picket guard of the Revolutionary Army was stationed here in 1777, and engaged the British in battle following the evacuation of Fort Mifflin. The Fairmount Park Commission acquired the building in 1913. The non-profit Friends of the Blue Bell interprets the tavern, which is under restoration.

John Bartram House

54th St. & Lindbergh Blvd., Philadelphia, PA

215-729-5281

www.bartramsgarden.org.index.html

The John Bartram House and Grounds (a.k.a. Historic Bartram's Garden) is located along the west bank of the Schuylkill River in southwest Philadelphia. The 44-acre site is a National Historic Landmark (NHL) designated by the U.S. Secretary of Interior on October 10, 1960. NHL designation, the highest level of recognition granted by the U.S. Government for historic properties, is a distinction held by only 2,300 historic resources nation-wide. Constructed between 1730-31, the house was the residence of John Bartram (1699-1777), America's first internationally recognized botanist. Bartram was a Quaker born in Darby Township. He purchased a 102-acre farm, which at the time was located outside of the City of Philadelphia.

The house continues to overlook the northernmost end of the tidal Schuylkill River. Bartram surrounded his stone house with extensive gardens filled with rare and exotic plants. His son William, who also achieved wide recognition as a botanist and naturalist, later enlarged the gardens. Through his extensive correspondence and travels, John Bartram brought native plant species to the attention of botanists throughout the world. In 1765 he was appointed royal botanist to King George III and remained so until his death in 1777. Self taught, John Bartram and his son William are credited with identifying and introducing into cultivation more than 200 of our native plants.



The extant buildings still stand thanks largely to the preservation efforts of Alexander M. Eastwick (1810-1879), who gave his name to the community in southwest Philadelphia. Eastwick was an inventor and railroad equipment manufacturer whose firm Harrison, Winans, & Eastwick built the St. Petersburg to Moscow Railroad for the Russian Czar between 1843 and 1850. Eastwick bought the Bartram estate in 1850 and erected an Italianate mansion near the original farmhouse. This mansion burned to the ground in 1896.

The Bartram NHL is a unique and valuable resource of national significance under the jurisdiction of the Fairmount Park Commission. It currently includes the John Bartram House, the coach house, stable, seed house, dovecote (originally for housing pigeons), botanical garden, wildflower meadow, parkland, and a wetland. In addition to house tours and educational lectures, the grounds are open to the public for picnicking, hiking, and bird watching. Arrangements can be made for special events such as weddings and conferences.

See Natural Sites section for additional information regarding wetlands and the Community Resources for educational programs and options.

Fort Mifflin

Fort Mifflin Rd., Philadelphia, Pa

215-685-4192

www.fortmifflin.org/



Fort Mifflin c. 1940

Fort Mifflin is located in southwest Philadelphia, adjacent to the confluence of the Schuylkill and Delaware rivers. The site is a National Historic Landmark designated by the U.S Secretary of the Interior in August of 1970. The fort played a significant role during the American Revolution and continued in use until the 20th century. The colonial army, directed by Major General Thomas Mifflin, began constructing the fort at the start of the Revolutionary War. In October and November of 1777, Fort Mifflin was the scene of a spirited defense by Americans against a British fleet intent on opening the Delaware River supply line into newly captured Philadelphia. Although the British ultimately

captured and destroyed the fort, this battle, along with those at Brandywine and Germantown, cost the British time and men and frustrated their efforts to disrupt the rebel government and its army. In 1795, following the Revolution, the fort was rebuilt in several phases according to the designs of the famous French architect Pierre L'Enfant, who also designed the plan for Washington, D.C. Several of the extant buildings inside the fort date back to this time, including the Commandant's House; others were erected subsequently during the 19th century.

The fort was used as a prison camp during the Civil War and was disarmed and abandoned by the U.S. Army after 1904. The site was deeded to the City of Philadelphia thereafter and eventually fell under the management of the non-profit Fort Mifflin on the Delaware, Inc. The organization restored the fort to its 1834 appearance. The Commandant's House is the only building that remains to be restored.



Interior view of Fort



Buildings within Grounds c. 1940

The fort is owned by the City of Philadelphia and is open to the public for guided tours and uniform and weapons demonstrations from April through November. Programming at the fort has recently been expanded into December, including several holiday events such as a Twelfth Night Celebration and Colonial Holiday Family Lunch. The grounds are also available for picnicking and bird watching.

See the Community Resources section for educational events and options.

Hog Island Shipyard

Remnants located on the Delaware River adjacent to Hog Island Road, Philadelphia, PA

One of the most famous names along the Delaware waterfront was Hog Island. This was the largest of several islands formed on the eastern boundary of Tinicum Township, where several freshwater creeks joined the Delaware River. Hog Island was part of a large tidal marsh complex and was originally settled by the Lenni-Lenapi Indians. European settlers bought the island from the Indians in 1680 and gradually "improved" it with log and earthwork dikes, gradually converting the marshes into good grazing meadows. Hog Island supposedly got its name from the pigs which local residents left to roam free, as no fencing was needed.

By the end of the 19th century, the U.S. government recognized the area's strategic importance because of its location adjacent to the Delaware River corridor's excellent regional road and rail connections. These conditions, plus the burgeoning industrial development nearby, caused the

U.S. government to select the site for its major shipbuilding effort for World War I. In September 1917, the American International Shipbuilding Corporation and the U.S. Shipping Board's Emergency Fleet Corporation purchased 900 acres of the island. Within a very short time, these agencies had constructed the Hog Island Shipyard, the largest in the world at the time.



The S.S. Mary Luckenbach, a Hog Island Class freighter

In 1925 the federal government acquired the shipyard, rapidly demolishing the structures and moving all the machinery, so that the site was soon barren and the trolley line closed. Hog Island reverted to farming and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continued to dump dredged silt from the shipping channel on the land to raise it above flood level. Eventually, the back channel and the creeks were filled and Hog Island became indistinguishable from the mainland. The U.S. Government continued to own Hog Island until 1932, when it was sold to the City of Philadelphia for the expansion of the Philadelphia Municipal Airport.

It was understood that the United States could, at the event of war or national emergency, use the property. In 1942 the War Department built an ammunition terminal and expanded the site in 1944. At the adjacent Philadelphia Municipal Airport, the Army National Guard, Army Air Force, Newcastle Army Airfield and the Navy all had regular aircraft service. Since the approach zone was over the ammunition terminal, the Army and Navy suspended all military air operations in 1943. In November of 1945 the ammunition terminal was "declared excess". Until this point hundreds of locals depended upon both the shipyard and the ammunition terminal as source of employment. Thus, the compound was not only beneficial nationally but also locally.

At one time, there were fifty shipways in the yard, including a fitting basin immediately south of the first shipway that was used to finish fitting the ships. The shipyard layout included an "igloo," several barricaded holding tracks, a damaged ammunition building, a burning ground, a fifty-car classification yard and a decontamination building. Many of the pilings and shipways can still be seen from the Delaware River at low tide, to the east of Hog Island Road; however, the former buildings are now covered by runways, taxiways, gravel roads and bush overgrowth. Little can be seen of the island from the land, as it now forms the western runways and the air traffic control tower of Philadelphia International Airport and the UPS headquarters. Along with the airport, the site is now host to a freight terminal, a marine oil terminal with several pipeline easements through the property, and areas of undeveloped land, much of which is under private ownership.

The Hog Island Shipyard remains famous for two reasons. First, some of the ships launched there still ply the oceans under several foreign flags. Secondly, many of the shipyard workers were of Italian descent and usually brought large loaves of bread spread with antipasto for their lunches. These workers were called "Hoggies" and this nickname also became attached to their sandwiches, a term now known worldwide as the "hoagie"!